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Cy No. 4

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4 June 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Estimate of Relative US-USSR Air Strength, as per  
the request of the Secretary of Defense

1. An estimate of relative US/USSR air strength may be conceived of at two levels:

- a. A tabulation of estimated US and USSR air order of battle as of a given date or dates.
- b. A series of estimates of relative air capabilities under a series of assumed hot war situations.

2. If 1a above is desired, national intelligence on Soviet air order of battle exists in the appendices to NIE-64 (Part I): Soviet Bloc Capabilities, through Mid-1953. The appendix to NIE-90: Soviet Bloc Capabilities through Mid-1955, soon to be cleared by the IAC, will project these estimates up to mid-1955. Similar data on US air order of battle could of course be furnished by the USAF. I believe that the Joint Staff, rather than the IAC, should be the issuing agency for a paper of this sort. It could be put together in rather short order.

3. If 1b above is desired, the resultant paper would have to be a complicated commander's estimate in which alternative realistic hot war situations were assumed, US plans laid on the table, and the whole war-gamed out to probable conclusions. I believe such an exercise would be necessary for the true appraisal of relative US-USSR air strength.

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4. I have discussed the above generally with the Board and specifically with General Bull. Because the project involves a full war-gaming exercise it is the Board's recommendation (and one in which I fully concur) that this paper is not one which the IAC could or should handle unassisted, but one which should be produced by a special ad hoc group comparable to the Edwards Committee. If such a project is laid on, the IAC community is in good shape to furnish coordinated national intelligence on Soviet raw air capabilities.

SHERMAN KENT  
Assistant Director  
National Estimates

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